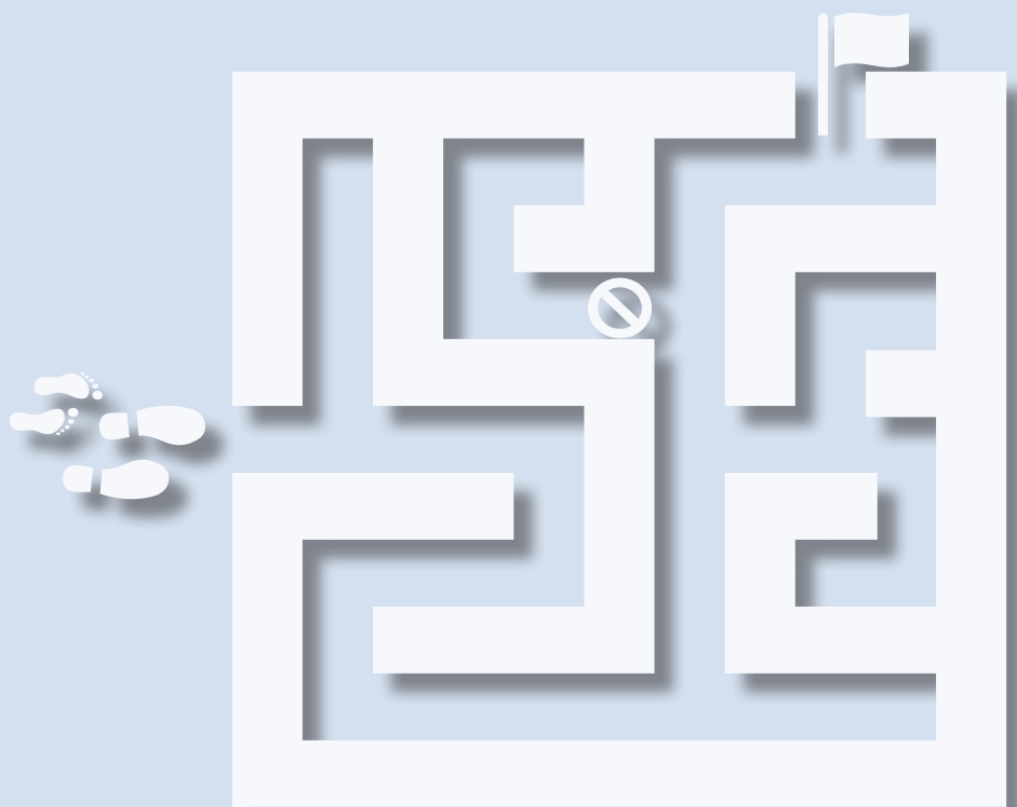


Characteristics and Issues of Internship at Cambodian Private Firms: A Scoping Study



**Eam Phyrom, Heng Sambath, Ravy Sophearth, Tim Bunly,
Song Sopheak**

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Abbreviations

CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ILO	International Labour Organization
MLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Highlights

- Internships at the selected Cambodian private firms are driven by the firms' internal interest for labour (pull factor) and by requests from students (or their educational institutions) seeking work experiences and employment opportunities (push factor).
- An intern at the selected Cambodian private firms generally has two identities or one of the two: as a pre-employment trainee who seeks work experience by offering assistantship and/or as a research student who seeks to observe the firm and collect data for their thesis.
- The observed internship programs generally involve five stages: the pre-internship, the orientation, the actual internship, the completion and the post-internship.
- The 14 selected firms for this study generally offer an allowance of USD50 per month to interns. Some firms do not pay an allowance at all; some pay slightly above USD100.
- Though challenges are reported, the three stakeholders (i.e., the firms, the interns, and the interns' educational institutions) generally acknowledge internship benefits.
- This study strongly recommends an enhanced collaboration between the firms and the interns' educational institutions at different stages to support internship implementation at Cambodian private firms. Such collaboration should focus on their meaningful internship experiences and value-added vocational capabilities, which include generic vocational competences, specific occupational competences, independent attitudes, and directed opportunities.

Executive summary

To respond to issues of “skill mismatch”, “skill gaps” and “low-skill labour” in the Cambodian labour market, the Cambodian government through the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT) issued the 2017 Internship Policy. This policy is part of a larger endeavour to link Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) providers to private firms and to allow TVET students to gain real work-based experiences that can help them transition smoothly from school to workplace. Though the policy has been released and internships have long been practiced in Cambodia, no study has been conducted to scope the fundamental structures and characteristics of Cambodian internship programs.

This study explores the purposes, processes, costs, challenges, benefits and satisfaction of existing internship programs of a small sample of Cambodian private firms, the major providers of internship in Cambodia. Fourteen firms participated in this exploratory study, generating qualitative interview data of 17 firm representatives (responsible for the internship program) and 25 interns (in different occupations). Thematic analysis was conducted to clean, code and interpret the interview data and relevant secondary and documentary data.

Purposes of internship: From the interpretation of our interview data, internship programs at the selected firms are structurally driven by two factors – a firm’s internal self-interest (i.e., the pull factor) and/or a need of an external agent (i.e., the push factor). The pull factor or the firm’s self-interest drive entails the fact that the firms need contemporary labour or future potential employees to serve the institution. The push factor or the need of an external agent suggests the fact that internship is offered according to a request from a university, a school, a TVET provider or an individual student to fulfil their course requirement, to collect data to write a thesis or to seek pre-employment training. To most of the firms’ representatives, these two factors function together, standing on the principle of mutual benefits.

Most of the observed internship programs are in the form of *pre-employment training*. Interns of this type have an identity related to assistantship as they seek to gain work experience and so are supposed to support firms’ staff in performing generic work tasks. Other cases of the observed internship programs are more in the form of *research and data collection* (i.e., interns coming to observe a firm and collect data or information for writing their thesis or a course assignment). Interns of this type have more of a research student or visitor identity.

Process of internship: Internship training approaches vary among the selected firms and among their industries or the offered training occupations. Interns at the selected Cambodian private firms may shadow tasks performed by supervisors, ask the supervisors questions and/or engage in actual practices of certain (generally less-demanding) tasks under the supervisor’s guidance. Supervisors generally offer additional advices on working attitudes to the interns. Interns receive a certificate after their internship is completed; some firms offer the certificate only upon request. A certain percentage of well-performing interns at most of the selected firms are reportedly recruited to become full staff.

The data from the 14 firms indicate that the internship programs generally last for 3 months (but can vary between 1 and 6 months). This observed internship period can be structurally summarised into five main stages: *the pre-internship stage* (i.e., interns seeking or being informed about internship opportunity, applying for internship and/or being interviewed); *the orientation stage* (e.g., interns being oriented about internal work regulations and benefits of internship); *the actual internship stage* (e.g., interns offering needed assistances, getting guidance and advices, observing tasks performed, taking notes); *the termination stage* (e.g.,

interns receiving feedbacks, certificate and/or incentives); and *the post-internship stage* (i.e., interns being offered a job opportunity and/or defending and writing up a thesis to graduate).

Benefits for interns: As suggested by the data, the firm-based internship programs in this study help transition and socialise students into a real working atmosphere and so give them opportunities for generic working knowledge and skills, career networks and possibly future employment.

Costs to firms: The main monetary cost of internship programs at the 14 firms is *the allowance* (generally, USD50 per month). Some firms do not pay allowance at all while others pay more than USD100. Other reported monetary expenses include insurance, free meals or meal allowance, uniforms, other petty financial expenses, and intangible costs incurred by the interns' uses of office spaces and materials. Additionally, reported non-monetary costs include supervisor's time and internship coordination time.

One of the major concerns to the firms is whether they really see tangible profits or gains from offering internship. In other words, some of the selected firms still see internship as a cost, not an investment. Only firms whose business nature deals with human resources are likely to see internship as an investment. As the firms cannot clearly visualise monetary gains from internship, they may not clearly and systematically organize internship – especially in terms of designing training programs, defining internship outcomes and supporting interns. As a result, the interns' terms of reference (ToR) and contract can be unclear as occupational roles or outcomes are generally not specified. The interns may not be aware beforehand of what specific occupational activities, skills or outputs they are expected to perform and accomplish.

Conclusions and implications: Though the level of satisfaction varies between the firms' representatives and the interns and from firms to firms, all the interviewees still recommend that Cambodian firms should provide more internship opportunities and that students should take part in internship. To create an internship program that collectively benefits all stakeholders, a multi-stakeholder collaboration mechanism among the firms, the educational institutions (i.e., universities, schools and/or TVET providers) and the interns should be established throughout the different internship stages – e.g., preparing, orienting, supervising/mentoring, monitoring stage. Improving and sustaining internship programs at Cambodian firms require such collaborative efforts to focus on designing/developing quality internship training at firms (e.g., in terms of availability of expert trainers, training materials, core documents and support system). The development should aim for meaningful internship experiences (i.e., psychological and physical well-being) and value-added vocational capabilities and outcomes (i.e., generic vocational competences, specific occupational competences, independent attitudes and directed opportunities). Such a proper internship arrangement at firms is necessary in bringing interns towards full, productive and decent employment. By offering interns competences and capabilities, internship programs can be an effective form of work-based learning in a context like Cambodia, where formal apprenticeship can take time to develop and the educational institution capacity to offer industry-relevant work-based training is limited. This in turn requires sincere intention and clear directions of all key actors (i.e., the government, the Cambodian educational institutions, the firms and the interns themselves).

1. Background

A productive and capable economy is an important catalyst for a nation to be competitive and wealthy in a sustainable way. Vocational and professional education and training, which offer a critical leverage for national production and productivity, receive heavy investment in many countries. The aim of such investment is to produce skilled and qualified labour forces to serve different sectors of the economy.

Such importance of economically-driven vocational education gives rise to various similar concepts and approaches for education and training, such as work-based learning, workplace-based learning, work-integrated learning, cooperative education, experiential learning, and practice-based learning (e.g., Stenstrom and Tynjala 2009; Solnet, Kralj, Kay and DeVeau 2009; Yiu and Law 2012; Comyn and Brewer 2018). All these models regard authentic and practical work experience as a necessary approach and/or an efficient learning process if students are to master a certain content knowledge, to become professional in their specialised vocation, to properly transition from school to workplace, and to further obtain a full, productive and decent employment.

In the same manner that the work-based approach to training is important, the linkage between training and real-world industry environment is simultaneously essential. The changes in technological and digital capacities and global industrial atmosphere require new skills, competencies and capabilities relevant to industry in order for students to get employed and work productively. In many countries, students are limited in industry-required skills and techniques to immerse into full and productive employment after their graduation (O'Higgins and Moscariello 2017). This necessitates the government and related stakeholders to search for new work-related schemes of learning and training to support the vocational education sector by linking universities or vocational education providers to private companies (through partnerships of some kinds) (MLVT 2017a). Partnerships and linkages benefit the involving parties beyond the training opportunities, as they generate resources, products and new forms of knowledge creation.

The call for partnership in turn gives importance to workplace-based training programs – such as apprenticeship and internship. Whether it is an apprenticeship or internship program, the logic behind the different training models remain the same: first the “real work experience” and second the “education-job linkage”. In some Western countries (including Switzerland, Germany, and Denmark), the gaps of work-based learning and the problem of school-to-work transition are bridged by the well-established formalised, dual, and paid apprenticeship arrangements. These models are formally co-governed and co-supported by a strong partnership among federal, state and professional associations (e.g., Wolter and Schweri 2002). In Singapore, the government once attempted to model its vocational and technical education by adopting the German “grammar + career” two-track system of education and the education factory philosophy (Mok 2013, 89). Mok claimed that the Singaporean government did this hoping to bring a “work-related environment” to schooling and to enhance the “experiential learning of students”. Other developed countries practice the unpaid but highly structured programs such as the French alternance program or the Swedish work placements (Sweet 2013). In some other Asian countries (e.g., China), the school-to-work transition gap is in some ways fulfilled by less-intensive, less-formalised and short-term internship programs that follow the end of the educational program terms. Internships of such kinds also directly involve three actors – the interns, the universities or TVET providers, and the firms (Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami 2010).

In Cambodia, even though the 1997 Labour Law legislates apprenticeship, UNESCO (2013) noted that it is not regulated in practice, and the concept of formal apprenticeship aimed at developing industry recognised profession at Cambodian firms has remained a doubt. This claim can be inferred from the various ministerial adjustments to the existing Labour Law via declarations and notifications (e.g. Notification 06/97; Declaration 004/00; Instruction 003/01; and Notification 042/15) in the hope to improve apprenticeship conditions.

The government has also turned to internship. The Internship Policy 2017 was issued by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT) to partially deal with critiques on issues such as “skills mismatch”, “skills gaps”, “low skilled labour forces” and “limited linkages between educational institutions and industries”. It [the policy] aims to develop students’ competence to fit the industrial standards (MLVT 2017b). Such a policy was driven more by practical importance and strategic feasibility – compared to the Labour Law that focuses on apprenticeship. In the same vein, internship has already been an important mechanism that connects private firms with Cambodian post-secondary education institutions. Many TVET promotion policies and approaches actually centre on and promote this idea of linkage or Public Private Partnerships (PPP) (UNESCO 2013; Khieng, Madhur, and Chhem 2015; MLVT 2017a). The private sector has likely been the most active provider of internship in the kingdom so far. It is generally acknowledged that contributions from the government and ministries, the private sector as well as universities and TVET providers are critical in promoting graduate employment in Cambodia.

Internship has grown in popularity and significance for Cambodian youth (MLVT 2017b). Increasing numbers of students at post-secondary education levels or even fresh graduates engage in internship experience in some form. Firms, non-governmental organisations and public institutions are offering short- to medium-term internship program (MLVT 2017b). At certain universities and higher education institutions, students are required to engage in internship or practicum programs in order to graduate; presumably, internship is part of the curriculum. Others institutions may encourage internship experience, but do not require this as a criterion for degree completion.

Despite all of this, academic and policy exploration of the internship program in Cambodia is very limited. Through a search on Google Scholar and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), no academic article is dedicated to the specific concept or practice of internship in Cambodia. Publicly available reports on internship implementation from Cambodian firms are also rare. The 2017 Internship Policy offers only policy guides and suggestions; as a policy guide, it does not analyse existing internship programs and their training environment in details.

The limitations of deep knowledge and clear understanding on internship practice pose some negative consequences. Firstly, the strategic policy choice requires adequate data, information and evidence in both a holistic and critical sense, meaning that policy makers in Cambodia might be unsure whether it is more strategic to focus on establishing a formal national apprenticeship system or to promote firm-based internship programs or to do both, and at which time and on what justifications. Secondly, the lack of adequate information about internship makes it hard for the government-promoted concept of PPP in the TVET sector to be systemically implemented. If firms, educational institutions and the government acquire adequate information and research-based insights about internship programs, there is a propensity that these stakeholders can cooperate better, more effectively and on the right strategic aspects. Lastly, firms may need scientific knowledge to promote their current practices of internship in a way that ensures students’ benefits as well as the firm’s own gains (in terms of productivity or learnability

and innovation for future business growth). Although firms may contribute to internship in some ways at present, the quality, decency and sustainability of such contributions is open to questions.

These issues bring two main sets of question on Cambodian internship:

1. What drives internship at Cambodian private firms? How do interns identify themselves?
2. How are internships implemented at private firms? What costs or benefits do firms, education institutions and interns get from engaging in internship? What challenges and satisfaction do firms, education institutions and interns perceive?

A scoping and systemic approach to research (on different aspects of internship) is needed to explore and explain these core questions. Such a scoping study should benefit different stakeholders of internship and add values to the understanding and arrangement of internship programs with better qualities and directions.

2. Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to explore the purposes, processes, costs, benefits, satisfaction and challenges of existing internship programs at Cambodian private firms. The study focuses particularly on internship training, not on other enterprise-based training programs such as on-the-job or off-the-job training of firm's employees. Within this scope, the study has four key objectives:

1. to identify the purposes and motives behind internship programs at Cambodian private firms,
2. to examine benefits and level of satisfaction gained by the firms, the interns and the interns' educational institutions,
3. to observe actual processes and approaches of internship (involved by different stakeholders), and
4. to examine costs and challenges incurred and faced by the firms, the interns and the interns' educational institutions in engaging in internship programs.

The purpose and nature of internship program – the first objective – refer to what drive firms to give opportunity to interns in the first place. Such causes imply how the identity of interns is defined or how interns are treated at the workplace. The second objective focuses on perceived benefits and the level of satisfaction with internship programs as experienced by the interns, the firms' representatives and the educational institutions. Both the first and the second objective are perceptual and reflective questions.

The actual processes and approaches of the internship program are observed in the third objective. This objective is a factual-information-generated part of the study, whereby the researchers seek to describe real intern selection procedure, training methods, interns' tasks and responsibilities, internship assessment or evaluation, mentoring or supervising practices, internship certification, and internship remuneration. Finally, the objective on internship costs and challenges of the current study aims to identify monetary expenses, labour-related costs and other costs for the firms incurred by internship. The interns and the firms' representatives are also inquired about the challenges of internship as they experience it. With these aspects explored and explained, the current study can offer a comprehensive scope of the whole structural features of internship in its current form at the selected Cambodian private firms.

3. Literature review and conceptual framework

Previous literature (e.g., Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami 2010; Zhao and Liden 2011; Stewart, Owen, Hewitt, and Nikoloudakis 2018; O'Higgins and Pinedo 2018) showed a surprise with the limited research focus on internship, given its practical importance. Despite so, existing studies related to internship offered perspectives on (but not limited to) four emerging themes: concepts of internship, processes of internship, benefits of and satisfactions with internship, and challenges of internship. These foundational themes and areas are discussed in the literature to guide most internship-related studies.

3.1. Concepts and types of internship

Definitions of internship: Definitions of internship can be viewed from various perspectives. One of them is an experience-centric perspective. According to Chang and Chu (2009), internships are short-term or part-time practical work experiences in which students receive training and gain experience in a workplace. Stewart et al. (2018, 15) similarly defined internships as “any arrangement for the performance of work within a business or organisation, a primary purpose of which is to gain experience, skills and/or contacts that will assist the worker to gain employment or other work opportunities in the future”.

Another perspective is centred on job recruitment and selection perspective. Internship can be considered an elongated type of work sample test that provides opportunities for interns and organisations to obtain realistic information and to evaluate each other before making long-term commitment (Zhao and Liden 2011). Hurst and Good (2010, 177) reviewed previous works and considered internship as a “new recruiting tool”.

Internship is also perceived through the lens of school-to-work linkage. It [internship] is a vital component of many professional programs in vocational education, which are designed to bridge the gap between the school-based learning of content knowledge and the practical reality of works by exposing them to work life (Lam and Ching 2007). Yiu and Law (2012) similarly claimed that the overall objective of internship (and other similar programs such as sandwich placement, practicum or work-study program) is to promote students' learning by combining practical work experience with classroom instruction. With that said, internship plays a critical role in transitioning students from school to a workplace in many countries, especially those without strong formal apprenticeship system (O'Higgins and Pinedo 2018; Stewart et al. 2018).

In Cambodia, the MLVT emphasized another element that generally constitutes the definition of internship (i.e., the “supervision” substance). The MLVT defines internship as a “form of learning from the experience that the trainee has to undergo through practical training, supervised by industry experts to gain practical work experience or obtain the requirements of any job-entry-level qualification” (MLVT 2017a). McMahon and Quinn (1995) similarly conceptualised internship as a “supervised work experience”, whereby a student is under special attention during the internship instead of working alone in the industry (as cited in Cheong et al. 2014, 334).

One of the factors that may render internship definitions unclear has been the similarity between internship and other forms of work-based training. From a theoretical and international perspective, internship can be distinguished from other similar types of programs such as apprenticeship and volunteering (See Table 1). *Internship* is more about transitioning from school to workplace. It is generally shorter termed and less intensive than is apprenticeship.

Interns get exposed to real work in a form of learning although they sometimes have to contribute in certain ways to productive working. The certification for internship usually indicates internship experience for a certain period of time, but does not express industry recognised credentials of a specific occupation. *Volunteering* is more about delivering services or contributing to certain collective activities by volunteer(s), generally without expecting benefits in return. According to Snyder and Omoto (2008), the decision to volunteer is based on the person's own goals and is without expectation of reward or punishment. The actions of volunteering must be voluntary – that is, performed on the basis of free will, without bonds of obligation or compulsion. In that sense, volunteering is sometimes not about learning. As for *apprenticeship*, there are formal, informal and traditional apprenticeship, all of which are more intensive and of longer terms than are internship and volunteering. Formal apprenticeship is structured and governed by the state or the regional government in collaboration with other stakeholders (such as trade or professional associations). Apprenticeship aims for productive working practices, meaning that apprentices are considered not merely as a learner (such as an intern) but as a worker or an employee who is expected to work productively while learning to master the industrial requirements of a specifically defined occupation. At the end of an apprenticeship program, apprentices – unlike interns – are expected to pass an exam (as a form of formal assessment) and gain industry recognised skills and competencies in their occupation.

Table 1: Comparing apprenticeship, internship and volunteering

	Apprenticeship	Volunteering	Internship
Goals for proficiency	Obtained occupational credentials and mastery	To offer skills, expertise or services needed	Exposure to work environment
Training form	Trained by master (s) and engaging in productive works of clearly defined occupation	Guided by the needs of the volunteer-seeking institution; sometimes not involving training	Supervised by senior staff and engaging more in job shadowing or in various less-demanding tasks
Training length	From 2 to 4 years, varying according to industries, occupations or firms	Generally for a short period of time but can be longer according to the real context of needs	Generally from 1 to 6 months or longer, varying according to industries, occupations or firms
Training agreement	A contract being formulated, especially for formal apprenticeship	Either with or without a formal contract	Either with or without a formal contract
Certification	Always available and focusing on industry recognised skills and competencies of a specific occupation	Maybe available, but more about appreciation, not about industry recognition of skills	Maybe available, but more about experience with or exposure to work environment, not about industry recognised skills or competencies
Governance at the national level	Yes, especially for formal apprenticeship	No	Generally governed at the firm level, but maybe organised as a specific scheme by the government in some countries
Examination	Yes	No	No

Source: Authors' syntheses

Different types of internship: Internships can be classified in various ways into two or three types according to different purposes, arrangements, payment status, time period, organisational structures or training processes. These include (but not limited to) paid vs unpaid internship,

educational vs non-educational internship, and internship involving productive works vs internship involving job shadowing (e.g., Hadjivassiliou et al 2012; Lain et al 2014; Stewart et al. 2018). As for the latest update of practical literature, three types of internship are defined by current ILO (International Labour Organization) studies (O'Higgins and Pileo 2018; Stewart et al. 2018, citing Hadjivassiliou et al 2012). O'Higgins and Pileo (2018) and Stewart et al. (2018) classified internships into educational internships (organised by educational institutions), open market internships (pushed by the needs for labour by different market agents) and Active Labour Market Programme (ALMP) which is formally organised by the state or the government.

Educational internships can be further classified as required and elective (Miller, Wilson, and Linrud, n.d.). For the elective internship option, the onus typically falls on the student to find their internship opportunity. Students who are unwilling or unable to find an internship may take additional coursework. The required internship, on the other hand, necessitates a greater allocation of resources in order to provide an adequate level of academic support for all interns. This means the educational department must direct substantial efforts towards activities that build better relationship with employers and improve their students' job searching and related skills.

Open market internships are offered by private or industrial firms in the market place to young graduates searching for first job experience, in a similar process to job application. O'Higgins and Pileo (2018, 12) reported that there is limited existing knowledge of open market internships and that it is a kind of post-graduate internship genre, which generally does not yield a favourable level of benefits back to the interns, compared to students who directly get employed after graduation.

The ALMP is also a kind of post-graduate internship. It is quite a new form of practice of internship and is only implemented in some countries (such as Czech Republic, Ireland and Yemen) (O'Higgins and Pileo 2018, 7). This form of internship program is initiated and supported by the government to make sure that the skills and competencies required by the labour market are fulfilled and that graduates from universities can well transition into the labour market. Also, it is a strategy to reduce the rate of unemployment.

Internship can also be classified into full-time and part-time ones. Full-time internship generally requires students to work around forty hours each week and may or may not allow them to take other classes concurrently (Miller, Wilson, and Linrud, n.d.). The part-time option, on the other hand, is where students can engage in class work and internship concurrently, thus participating less in terms of number of hours per working day, which can restrict internship benefits (Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011). Miller, Wilson, and Linrud (n.d.) further found that employers prefer full-time internship because interns can be scheduled for more regular work hours and so can be better observed, while also leading to less time conflict between work and study.

Finally, internship can be categorised from a monetary perspective. Some internships are paid; some are not. Paid and unpaid internships are mostly determined by whether the participating organisation is a non-profit or for-profit (Jackel 2011). Intern pay can be a critical factor influencing internship and is considered one of the three predictors of student employment enhancement, with the other two being the number of hours worked weekly at the internship, and the availability of the program coordinator (Jackel 2011).

3.2. Processes and stages of internship

Previous works have observed internship as a process (e.g., Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami 2010; Zhao and Liden 2011), while highlighting this operational perspective as a significant aspect for research on internship. Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami (2010) found that it is the internship process that partly determines interns' satisfaction.

There are different stages in implementing the whole internship process. Diambra, Cole-Zakrzewski, and Booher (2004) synthesised previous studies and reported three models of internship stages:

- Internship Stage Model by Inster and Ross (1998) – arranging internship, orientation, reconciling expectation and reality, productivity and independence, closure and reality;
- Internship Stage Model by Sweitzer and King (1999) – anticipation, disillusionment, confrontation, competence and culmination; and
- Internship Stage Model by Kiser (2000) – pre-placement stage, initiation stage, working stage, and termination stage.

Garavan and Murphy (2001), from a socialisation perspective, further observed the internship process in just three development stages: getting in, breaking in and settling in. At these different stages, distinctive designs, approaches, strategies and training activities of internship have been observed.

For example, there are managed and unmanaged approaches to recruit students into internship program. These approaches depend on how educational institutions want to engage their students during the internship period. The managed approach means students have no freedom of choice, with educational institutions arranging the placement by assigning students to different industries (Christou 1999, as cited in Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011). From the curriculum perspective, the managed option is preferable because an educational institution can make sure students are placed in an industry relevant to their field of study (League of Oregon Cities 2009 cited in Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011) and ensures coherence between what is taught at school and outside of school (Walo 2001). This approach is what Miller, Wilson and Linrud (n.d.) considered as the required educational internship option.

The unmanaged approach, on the other hand, means that students look for the internship by themselves. The ease with which students get access to industries to enrol will lessen delays and frustrations when searching for vacancies in industries for an internship (Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011). When the departments at an educational institution post all internship opportunities, students are free to pursue whichever of these positions they wish (Miller, Wilson, and Linrud, n.d.). The unmanaged option has the advantage of students having first-hand knowledge about the labour market, which becomes a source of information for future employment (Divine et al. 2007, as cited in Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011). This approach also requires far less administrative effort and perhaps is a fairer approach for students since it gives them the opportunity to compete for all available internship opportunities (Miller, Wilson, and Linrud, n.d.).

The internship duration as well as the time of the year in which internships are organised vary across countries as well. Internship programs in the United States (USA) may provide internship periods lasting from 2 to 18 months in relevant study programs, whilst in most European countries, programs last from 3 to 12 months (Internship USA 2008; Aston University Careers and Employability Centre 2009 cited in Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011). A six-month

period for internship is quite usual with educational institutions around the globe (Lam and Xiao 2000; Mihail 2006; Walo 2001).

3.3. Benefits of and satisfaction with internship

Internship satisfaction appears to be the most investigated area in research about internship experiences and is generally discussed with internship benefits and internship effectiveness (e.g., Taylor 1998; Coco 2000; Hurst and Good 2010; Negrut, Mihartescu, and Mocan 2015). Internship is necessary for students to get socialised formally into the company culture and the world of work while they are still studying, as it offers a maturing experience for interns (Hurst and Good 2010). As the authors argued, rather than simply providing knowledge regarding a career or serving as a source of funding for their education, the internship experience may result in an increased awareness and understanding of how to work with others in the real world. Internship can also promote a nexus between industrial institutions and educational institutions in terms of learning and innovation. The greater ability to identify and bring in external ideas and technologies enhances an industry's flexibility to respond to changing customer needs (Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011).

Internship therefore offers benefits for students, employers and schools (Miller, Wilson, and Linrud, n.d.). Students benefit from internships because the professional work experiences make them more marketable (Taylor 1998); employers like internships because they [the internships] provide risk-free-trial access to potential future employees (Coco 2000); and schools get benefit because internships help strengthen their connection with the business community (Coco 2000). Table 2 describes in more detail the various potential benefits of internship programs.

Table 2: Benefits to interns, firms and educational institutions

	Benefits and perceived satisfaction	References
Interns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated credit hours to complete student's study program; • An enabler for student to identify a career field of interest; • More experience in a work environment which can be used as a leverage in finding a job and building a career; • Providing interns with opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to the world of work; • Allowing interns to reflect on their own strengths, weaknesses, and interests; • Familiarising interns with a career-oriented setting; • Helping interns assess the workplace environment and determine the salience of their career goals; • Providing the opportunity to network in the professional arena; • Helping students sharpen job skills and work values; • Positively influencing students' career choices. 	Cheong et al. 2014; Miller, Wilson, and Linrud, n.d.; Staribratov 2018; Paulins 2008, as cited in Hurst and Good 2010; Mihail 2006, as cited in Hurst and Good 2010
Firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to hire people with knowledge and work experience to a certain degree; • Helping young people to be well-prepared for their needs; • Taking the opportunity to assess, monitor and train a potential and qualified employee because interns are relatively well educated and have acquired a substantial amount of organisation-specific knowledge from working in the host organisation; • Raising awareness and expressing good wills and social responsibilities about their organisation; • Saving costs in the recruiting channel for employers; • Interns being the advertiser for the firm's job opportunities to their peers; 	Staribratov 2018; Negrut, Mihartescu, and Mocan 2015; Zhao and Liden 2011; Hurst and Good 2010; Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011; Szadvari 2008, as cited in Hurst and Good 2010

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interns being an excellent recruiting tool, a source of current information and a way to ‘preview’ the skill sets of potential future employees; • Interns possibly bringing a new, structured approach to business that is not always seen in the more seasoned employees; • Interns sometimes possessing content knowledge and technical skills that full-time employees may not. 	
Educational institutions (e.g. universities, schools or TVET providers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internship playing a fundamental role in preparing undergraduates for entry-level jobs; • Internship strengthening university links with industry and enabling a better understanding of what business and industry expect from students; • An internship experience being an impressive listing on a student’s curriculum vitae and being the deciding factor in securing employment; • Internships helping validate the university’s curriculum. 	Verney, Holoviak, and Winter 2009, as cited Hurst and Good 2010; Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011; Ramos 1997, as cited in Hurst and Good 2010; Cook, Parker, and Pettijohn 2004

3.4. Costs and challenges of internship

Internship costs are generally discussed as an overall challenge for firms. Generally, to obtain practical experiences from works, interns often need a lot of support and inputs from the educational institution and the recruiting firm. So, the firm, especially, has to invest quite significantly to make internship functions. However, the European Commission has identified that about 30 percent of internships are deficient in terms of either learning content or working environment (Stewart et al. 2018). This issue can be more serious in developing countries whose labour markets and working systems may not yet consider internship as being important as full employment.

In serious cases, especially in the open market type of internship, cheap labour problems can be detrimental for interns (e.g., O’Connor and Bodicoat 2016). In certain industries or businesses, the label of internship can be used to cheat students to work for little or no benefit by misusing the justification of gaining practical experiences. In the internship literature, this critical theorist perspective casts doubtful eyes on internship as an exploitation of the young graduates. This argument is related to both the paid and the unpaid genres. The paid internship can still fall into the exploitation trap when the amount paid is not equivalent to the contributed labour force of the students.

Because interns are inexperienced and new to the workplace, their quality of work can be very low, unless there is enough collaboration among the stakeholders to support them. Collaboration between school and industry (Divine et al. 2007), placement procedures (University of Pittsburgh 2009 cited in Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011), duration and time (Mihail 2006; Divine et al. 2007), and assessment procedures (Walo 2001) of internship can be factors that culminate the manner in which internship implementation is carried out (Lam and Ching 2007; McManus and Feinstein 2008; Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011).

Another challenge for firms providing internships is that some employers see internship as a cost, not an investment (e.g., Violette, Violette and Hendrix 2013, 11). Yui and Law (2012, 387) asserted that some employers do not know the purpose of internship and use interns only to fulfil the labour shortage.

It should be noted that, unlike the discussion of costs of apprenticeship, the analysis of costs of internship in monetary terms in the existing literature has been rare. One explanation of this is that the internship costs are not as substantial as that of the apprenticeship costs, given shorter time periods and lower intensity in training. Actually, internships also have a cost structure similar to the costs spent on general staff. The expenditure of internship generally includes monthly stipends/allowances to interns, other non-stipends (such as insurance), and costs shared with other staff in using facilities or materials in the workplace. But these costs vary a lot from firms to firms, occupations to occupations, and countries to countries. The lack of empirical cost-benefit analyses of internship programs leaves an uncertainty in firms' decision on whether to offer or promote an internship opportunity or not.

3.5. Conceptual framework

Because no significant literature has been published about internship in Cambodia, this study is purely exploratory and descriptive on the topic. It is not theoretically deductive, in other words. To guide this exploratory work, the general discussion of the academic and practical literature above offers some conceptual and thematic aspects of internship to explore (See Table 3 below).

Table 3: Focused conceptual dimensions of the study

Focused research themes	Specific attributes
1. Purposes of internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purposes and motives behind internship implementation Types of internship Intern's identities
2. Processes and stages of internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different stages of internship Duration of internship Approaches, strategies and activities of internship
3. Benefits of and satisfaction with internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interns' benefits and level of satisfaction Firms' benefits and level of satisfaction Educational institutions' benefits and level of satisfaction
4. Costs and challenges of internship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and physical costs and challenges of firms, interns and educational institutions Other costs and challenges of firms, interns and educational institutions

4. Research methodology

This is a qualitative study, aiming to grasp the overall picture and characteristics of internship at Cambodian private firms through practical experiences and reflective insights of interns and firms' representatives. The study covers two major industries in Cambodia and various types of businesses within them: the service industry (i.e., banking, technology, hotel and tourism, construction, media, medicine and human resource consulting services) and the manufacturing industry (i.e., electronic products, medical products, and food products).

4.1. Research approaches

The approach to this investigation is exploratory, aiming to scope, examine and describe key features related to internship programs at the purposively selected Cambodian private firms. The study collected qualitative data and information related to the overall characteristics of internship programs as well as quantitative and financial data (when possible) on costs and benefits of those internship programs. Descriptive facts as well as perceptual and reflective responses from the target participants were drawn via interviews containing open-ended

and specific facts-generating or behavioural questions (See Appendix 1 and 2). Descriptive information – such as allowances for interns or duration of the internship – were inquired to the respondents, with further triangulating of different sources of these needed information (e.g., via interns’ answers, firm representatives’ answers and other available official documents of the internship programs) to make sure that the information is accurate. Perceptual and reflective information, on the other hand, was analysed based on the interpretivist paradigm. Namely, the researchers acknowledged that knowledge of a phenomena is subjective to the respondents’ thinking or perceptions.

4.2. Data collection procedure and instruments

The participating firms or enterprises were contacted through an official permission-seeking letter and then a confirmation via phone call. The researchers directly contacted the focal person assigned by each firm to set up the interview schedule. The interviewers were trained and guided through several meetings on interview procedure and techniques before engaging in the actual interview. Twenty-seven private firms or enterprises were selected in the beginning, using the sample information from a prior (related) study of Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) to guide the selection. However, only 14 private firms accepted the request and participated in the study. The data was collected between October and December 2017. Because the nature of this study is exploratory, the researchers started with this small and purposive sample, with the aim to gain an in-depth understanding of critical issues of internship programs at the selected Cambodian private firms.

The study’s core data collection method is a semi-structured interview. Two sets of interview guides were formulated, one for the firm representative in charge of facilitating and training new interns, and another for the interns. Each set of the interview guides consists of four main sections: interviewee self-introduction and institution introduction; factual information and experience about internship programs (e.g. process, costs and benefits); perceptions on internship; and interview closure. The interview guide for the firm representative consists of eight main questions, while that for the interns has seven questions. Additional, prompted questions to these main questions were asked during the interview according to the real interview situation.

The interviewers generally started by introducing themselves and their institution, elaborating on the interview and research objectives and seeking a consent and approval from participants for the use of a voice recorder. Two types of interviewees assigned by the firm were engaged: one or two senior officer (s) responsible for facilitating and training interns and one or two intern(s). The total number of interviewees was 42 (17 firm representatives from 14 firms and 25 interns from 13 firms).

Table 1 is a summary of the number of all participants by institutions and industries. Upon firms’ requests, the identity of the firms and the respondents was not revealed, and identity codes were used instead. Most interviews were voice-recorded and lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

In addition to the interview datasets, this study also drew on secondary sources of information available on the firms’ websites, collected written documents from the firms during the interviews, and written national policies and regulations related to internship. These include, but not limited to, Firm 1’s raw internship dataset, Firm 2’s internship regulation, Firm 11’s reported internship dataset, the MLVT’s 2017 Policy on Internship, the MLVT’s National Policy on TVET, and the 1997 Labour Law.

Table 4: Participating firm's characteristics

Types of industry	Firm code	Descriptions	Location	Number of firm representatives	Number of interns
Service	Firm 1	Human resource services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 3	Construction engineering services and building technology services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 4	Construction engineering	Phnom Penh	2	2
	Firm 5	Media services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 7	Hospitality and tourism services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 8	Automobile services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 9	Construction engineering services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 10	Human resource services	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 11	Banking services	Phnom Penh	2	2
	Firm 12	Hospitality and tourism services	Kratie province	1	0
	Firm 13	Hospitality and tourism services	Siem Reap province	1	2
Manufacturing	Firm 2	Food production	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 6	Medicine production	Phnom Penh	1	2
	Firm 14	Electronic gadget production	Phnom Penh	2	1
Total				17	25

4.3. Data analyses

Recorded interview data was transcribed in full form and in a consistent format. Interview notes were taken by the interviewers. Reflective memos on the notes during the field work and throughout the interview period were also written by the interviewers. Secondary published documents collected during the interview, as well as from the firms' websites, were also analysed together with the interview transcripts. All transcripts, notes, memos and secondary documents were input into the NVIVO platform (version 12) for analysis.

On the platform, the researchers read the dataset several times to sensitise the data and its contents. Thematic analyses were then conducted in order to analyse the qualitative data. Thematic analyses involve identifying themes and interpreting patterns based on generative codes from the data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 95). This method is a popular analysis in the qualitative research paradigm due to its flexibility. There are six phases of thematic analysis: familiarising with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun and Clarke 2006, 95). All of these stages were followed in the study. There were three levels of coding, starting with the initial codes containing key phrases, terms and repeated ideas. These level-1 codes include not only emerging ideas but also some exact information from the interview. They were not pre-determined. The level-2 codes were the synthesised sub-themes from the level-1 codes. At this stage, the analysis started its conceptual abstraction of the data. The third stage generated themes which were further synthesised from the level 2 sub-themes. Each of the themes at the third-stage coding responded to particular questions in the interview guides and the main research questions.

Following all these stages allowed the researchers to have a completed structural codebook in the NVIVO platform for further analyses, interpretation and discussions. The study findings were reported based on those structural themes and codes, and relevant quotes were extracted from the raw interview dataset to present and ensure fidelity of the results. Despite the fact that the study is exploratory and qualitative, the data collection and the analyses of the dataset were adequately structured and systematically processed, thus ensuring that unacceptable data treatment and researchers’ confirmation biases were avoided.

4.4. Methodological limitations

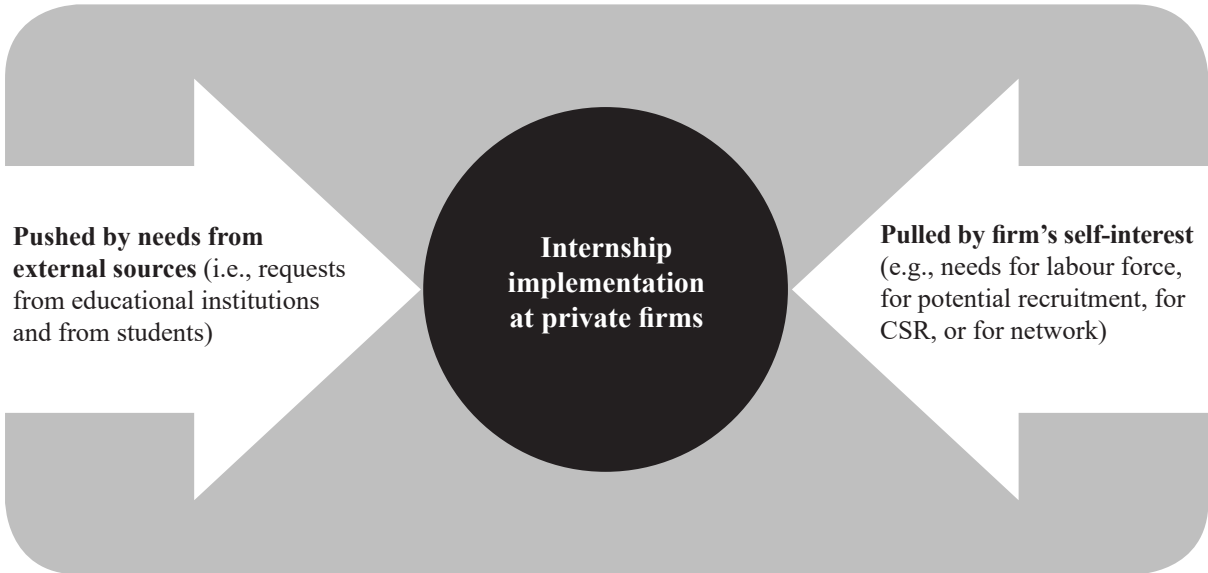
Only 14 of the 27 requested firms agreed to participate in the data collection. Also, one among the selected 14 firms is not a purely private business institution. Using donation, its goal is to provide training to disadvantaged people rather than to gain profits. However, we included them into the analysis because the internship training at that institution was part of a more business-oriented approach to earn income to support the institution. Also worth highlighting is that our first attempt to measure costs of internship was not successful because those firms did not convert all expenditures into monetary terms. We could only partially present the reported monthly allowances of internship, not the actual total cost of internship.

5. Findings and discussions

5.1. Purposes and motives behind internship implementation at the selected firms

The development of internship programs at Cambodian private firms is not driven by any macro-level policy direction or scheme. Internship programs at the private firms have taken place long before the release of the Internship Policy in 2017. Such an organic evolution creates diversities in implementing internship at firms. Internships vary in terms of purposes, designs, time duration, procedures and approaches.

Figure 1: Push and pull motives behind internship program at Cambodian private firms



CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility
Source: Authors

Based on the interview data, the main drives underlying internship programs at the selected firms can be classified into two: internships pulled by the firm's self-interest and internships pushed by the needs from external agents (i.e., educational institutions and students). For the majority of the 14 firms, these two forms of internship simultaneously exist, and they interplay on mutual benefit principles.

Internship pulled by the firm's self-interest: The selected Cambodian firms offer internship programs for labour need reasons. The firms generally need assistances from interns at certain times for certain tasks, generic or specific. The recruited interns are expected to work mostly on generic tasks that are not highly skills-demanding or productivity-oriented. The firms prefer internship because they would have to pay more to hire full staff to do the tasks the interns can do. All of the firms' representatives interviewed acknowledged their labour need reasons.

Whenever there is a project, we need more human resources. If there is no intern, the number of staff can be too limited to handle the project... we also will give opportunities to interns or to students who request for internship to learn and practice at the work place. (9CKFR)

... we need human resources. We are able to find human resources and staff by opening this internship program. (7CBFR)

Relating to such labour needs, most firms in the dataset also pointed to future potential recruitment. The representative from a manufacturing company confirmed:

... internship for recruitment purpose... they can become staff if they have very good performance... So far about 20 personnel are former interns. (14MNBFR)

Another from a human resource consulting firm added:

One of the reasons why we provide internship is that it is difficult for the students to find a job after they graduate because they do not have any experiences, so internship is a program that allows them to work without the need for prior experiences. They only need to have some knowledge and clear goals about what they want to do in the future, and we will give them the chance if we can see their commitment. (10APFR)

The firms also give interns the internship opportunity due to what is referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It [CSR] can be considered a form of firm's self-interest. Firms can gain positive reputation or image by engaging in such social responsibility activities. A human resource manager of a hotel stated:

... we are able to help the students who are looking for work experiences. Also, it [internship] is a part of social activities and networking. Besides, for all of what we do, it is a response to the company's philosophy or recruitment policy because in the future we also want to be the company of choice. In simple words, it is about branding, so these factors are the main reasons why the hotel started the internship program. (7CBFR)

The firm representatives during the interview either pointed specifically to the idea of CSR or raise certain ideas related to this concept – such ideas as “to contribute to building capacity of the next generation”, “to help the society”, “for social benefits”, “to help Cambodian students to link theory to practices”, and “to help Cambodian students to transition into workplace”. In some ways, the notion of CSR is quite idealised, and in practices it exists in various other ways, not necessarily via internship.

It is interesting to note that a firm in our sample, which is a unique case, takes its internship program as part of its business strategy. This consulting firm, dealing with human resource business, has to recruit many staff to serve their clients, so the internship program helps them figure out these potential and capable candidates. Firms with that kind of business see interns, interns' networks and interns' educational institutions as an important asset. Once they need staff to supply to their clients, they can contact their former interns or the interns' educational institutions (universities, schools or TVET providers) within their networking sphere. This kind of internship tendency cannot be generalised, however.

When asked whether internship is legally required, participants offered different and contradictory viewpoints. Some, disclaiming the lack of legal clarity, believed that the Cambodian Labour Law requires firms to implement internship. In this scenario, the idea of internship is confused with the idea of apprenticeship. A few firms' representatives asserted that their internship program is a part of that required apprenticeship in the Labour Law. In actuality, the 1997 Labour Law requires firms with more than 60 staff to conduct enterprise-based apprenticeship program, not the internship program. Some other firms in the interview, however, correctly explained that internship is voluntary, and there is no legal pressure. The internship policy was released in 2017 (during the time of data collection of this study), but there is no legal requirement for firms to have to implement internship program, besides the policy encouragement for firms to do so. One interviewer confirmed: "It [internship] is not something imposed by the ministry... Internship opportunity has always been given so far. The company is open." (4IREFR)

The firm-interest-driven internship program in Cambodia is indifferent from the general causes of internship in other countries. It is close to the idea of open market internship reported by Stewart et al. (2018).

Internship pushed by the needs from external sources: Besides the firm's internal, self-interest reasons, internship programs at the selected Cambodian private firms can be factored by external needs or forces – basically the needs from education institutions (i.e. universities, schools or TVET providers) to give workplace-based experiences to their students as well as the need of the students to complete their educational programs, transition to workplace or to simply get pre-employment training.

Most of the observed internship programs are in the form of *pre-employment training*, where interns have an identity of assistantship, seek to gain work experience and are supposed to serve and learn from generic work tasks and/or specific occupational skills upon their discussions with the firms' representative. For a smooth-flowing collaboration to happen, some educational institutions organise certain kinds of network with firms for their students to enjoy internship opportunities with some support arrangements. Such collaboration between the firms and the educational institutions on internship can even be in an official form of signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). In this study, Firm 6 is a case of that. Some educational institutions do not organise internship for their students (i.e. using the unmanaged approach to internship), so the students have to find an opportunity on their own. There were cases from our data where students found the internship themselves because they want working experiences related to their specific field of study or to a particular area of interest. As one intern from Firm 10 put it:

I did not know anything about internship when I was doing the thesis because I was only fulfilling the school's requirement, and since I almost graduated, I was afraid that I would not have a job. So, I applied for internship myself. Besides, I also wanted the experiences that relate to the theories I have learnt before. (10API1)

Another intern similarly added:

Even if the school does not require, I will do it. I want experiences. I want to know what real work in my specialization is like... I want to be an intern only in the field of my specialization... (IMAI2)

Other cases of the observed internship programs are more in the form of *research and data collection*. That being said, the interns come to observe the firm and ask for information to be used as data for writing their thesis or a course assignment. Interns of this type have more of a research student or a visitor identity. Most interns in the samples engaged in internship partly for such an educational reason. At its extreme, the internship program of this *research and data collection* nature does not really involve actual working at the firm. In our data, only two firms (i.e., Firm 2 and Firm 11) are purely of this type. Their interns came to the firms just to observe and collect data. The interns were required to present their research report to the firms at the end of their internship period, so that the firms could make sure that the students do not use the firms' data inappropriately. An intern from Firm 11 noted: "I was not required to do anything as I am here for thesis... they gave me document and guided me around." (11ACDI1)

Certain universities and TVET providers in Cambodia have internship as a part of their curriculum – whether the internship gives students credits or not. Others that do not have such a program still push their students to engage in internship because there is generally no work-based platform at the educational institution for students to practice what they have learnt. So, in many cases, the firms' representatives claimed that it is schools and interns themselves that come to the firm to seek internship opportunity. Students may engage in internship when they have time and even more than one time throughout their educational pursuit. An intern of a human resource consulting company put it:

It [internship] is introduced by the university as a compulsory task for degree. Students have to be an intern for 270 hours... Students can be an intern after acquiring more than 80 program credits... I am not yet at the stage to be an intern, but I have free time, and so I want to complete the requirement. (IMAI2)

The internships shaped by the needs of the educational institution or the students to fulfil their course or program requirements are close to the idea of "educational internship" discussed in the ILO working paper's current findings (see Stewart et al. 2018). This educational internship is to be differentiated from the other types: the earlier mentioned ALMPs and the open-market internship. Educational internship is a multi-stakeholder undertaking whereby proper coordination and facilitation between firms and educational institutions are vital in its success. It has to be made clear here that the provision of the educational internship does not need to be mutually exclusive from the firm's self-interest internship. To most of the firms' representatives in the current dataset, these two types of internship function together, standing on the principle of mutual benefits.

Observed interns' identities: One important outcome of the different natures and purposes of internship is how internship shapes the identity of the interns and how they [the interns] are treated. From our limited data on internship identity, the interns who engaged in internship purely pushed by the need to write a thesis or a course assignment are seen or treated as an external researcher, a visitor or a mere observer, coming to the firm just to observe certain practices and collect certain information. They were neither seen as a pre-employment trainee nor an assistant and neither an internal staff. On the other hand, the students who became interns because the firms need their labour were seen more as an assistant or a pre-employment trainee.

They were treated as someone trained to prepare for future employment or even sometimes unofficially regarded as an internal employee/staff. In such cases, the boundary between being an intern and being a probation staff is sometimes vaguely demarcated. These natures and purposes of internship and their resultant subconscious identities of the interns generally influence internship approaches, behaviours towards interns, interns' benefits and other aspects of internship. However, these two identities were not necessarily mutually exclusive. In most of the cases, the two identities co-function because an intern may engage as an assistant (taking various responsibilities) while also collecting data to complete their educational program.

Table 5 showed interns' identities in relation to the internship motives of each selected firm. It is clear that most interns were both an assistant who was trained to work at the firm and an observer who came to collect data to fulfil school requirements. For some firms (e.g. Firm 12 and 13), however, even though the firm's motives behind internship were both pushed by internal needs and pulled by external requests, the interns there were generally treated as an assistant, and they did not engage in data collection.

Table 5: Relationship between internship motives and the observed interns' identities at the selected firms

Firms	Purpose of internship at each firm	Observed intern identities at each firm
Firm 1	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 2	Pushed by universities or student's request to observe the works or collect data	More like an external observer or a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 3	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 4	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 5	Pulled by firm's needs for labour force	More like a work experience seeker providing assistantship as a pre-employment training
Firm 6	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 7	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 8	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 9	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 10	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements
Firm 11	Pushed by universities or student's request to observe the works or collect data	More like an external observer or a research student collecting data to complete school requirements

Firm 12	Both push and pull factors	More like a work experience seeker providing assistantship as a pre-employment training
Firm 13	Both push and pull factors	More like a work experience seeker providing assistantship as a pre-employment training
Firm 14	Both push and pull factors	Both as a work experience seeker providing assistantship and a research student collecting data to complete school requirements

5.2. Reported internship benefits and level of satisfaction at the selected firms

The theme of mutual benefits can be reflected from the responses of both the firms' representatives and the interns. Benefits of internship for the selected Cambodian private firms have yet to be measured in monetary terms; so, most raised benefits are in qualitative terms. For the firms' representatives, the idea of internship benefits is closely related to the nature or purpose of the internship – i.e., the fulfilling of labour needs, the potential recruitment, the network, the gain of reputation and sometimes the business strategies. The data revealed that the firms' representatives in general are satisfied with the internship program at their respective firm. What the participants appreciated the most about internship are the firms' contribution back to society and next generation and the potential acquisition of quality staff to serve the firm. The representatives offered similar responses as below:

Internship is important in helping us finding human resources for the future. They have potentials and we also can save some costs. Advertisement (through Bang Thom and CamHR...) costs us. They spend time with us 2 or 3 months; we know their working ability, characteristics and behaviours... because we observe their commitment and attitudes... (6PPMFR)

Another important thing is that the interns help us with a lot of works ... such as making a copy of a file, checking the files, especially during auditing which is conducted twice a year. (9CKFR)

... in the interns' thesis, they mention at which institution they had internship, so we always receive an appreciation letter from their university every year. (11ACDFR)

The majority of the interns also showed satisfaction on their internship experience. For most of them, the lessons of soft skills, the real application of theoretical knowledge, and the vocational opportunities they acquire during the internship are most vital. The interns are also generally satisfied when they experience welcoming attitudes and adequate support from their senior staff. Interns, in general, claimed that they do not engage in the internship for monetary benefits despite the fact that they appreciate the allowance offered. They further claimed that engaging in internship is the best opportunity cost since they may spend time on other less valuable activities if they do not engage in internship. Even without the requirement from schools, most interns thought they would still apply to various firms and engage in an internship program as they want to know their vocational interest. Some interns proclaimed:

The works are related to some extent to what I studied. But practices and theories are somehow different. Theories rarely talk about problems. In the working place, we see a lot of problems. For example, the problem on data! And on time management! I think it [internship] enhances my learning at school a lot. I do some more research on specific tasks at workplace. (IMAI2)

Although sometimes I face some challenges, it [internship] is an opportunity to learn new things. I learnt about new technology and met people and built network. After finishing the internship, I could get a job. Also, it is what I need to fulfil in terms of our required credits at school. (6PPMI1)

What we learn at school are not the same as things we learn at workplace. For example, I have studied for four years on banking; I learn hard and soft skills. Some people are very good at school, but they cannot communicate well. I set my goals that I get trained in HR first year, then accounting in second year and then in finance ... So, the more I engage in internship, the more I understand my talent – what I really love... After that I can choose which area to work in. If we do not have internship experiences, we are completely new. If we used to be an intern, firms are likely to contact us... (1MAI1)

Because the company provides us new information... say if we do not understand the electricity flow, we can scan the system through a computer at the company. Besides, the electrical system is different from the technical system in general. When I first graduated from the university, I only knew information about air conditioner, and I did not know anything about interior sections since we only learnt the basic things at school. (8RMAI12)

Because both parties are satisfied with the internship programs, the 14 firms and all the interns in our samples would respectively recommend other firms and students to engage in internship experiences. Certain firms' representatives also called for more awareness raising about internship to students and educational institutions.

We can also further understand from the data that the educational institutions gain benefits from internship, as inferred from the interns' and the firms' responses. The universities and TVET providers can enlarge their network opportunities with firms. They can give opportunities for real work application to their students. This is highly necessary for those educational institutions that have limited resources at their campuses. They can also give chances for their students to be employed after graduation, which in turn gives back fame and reputation to the educational institutions. One intern, for example, asserted that "It is a benefit for schools, students and firms alike. When students have more internship experience, they are likely to be employed. So, the school has the reputation (1MAI1)." This comment corresponds well to a firm representative' remark on the gaps schools face in educating and training students:

The interns will be trained on certain skills when they start their internship. Although they are good at school, all skills the interns obtain from school may not be used at firm because the firm uses newly updated technology. Schools teach only basic skills. Every year we face a challenge that we cannot find enough senior technicians who have 4- or 5-year experiences and know proper English. (8RMAFR)

Table 6 illustrated a detailed list of the common themes emerging from all the responses on good experiences and points of satisfaction from the three stakeholders of internship – i.e., the firms, the educational institutions, and the interns.

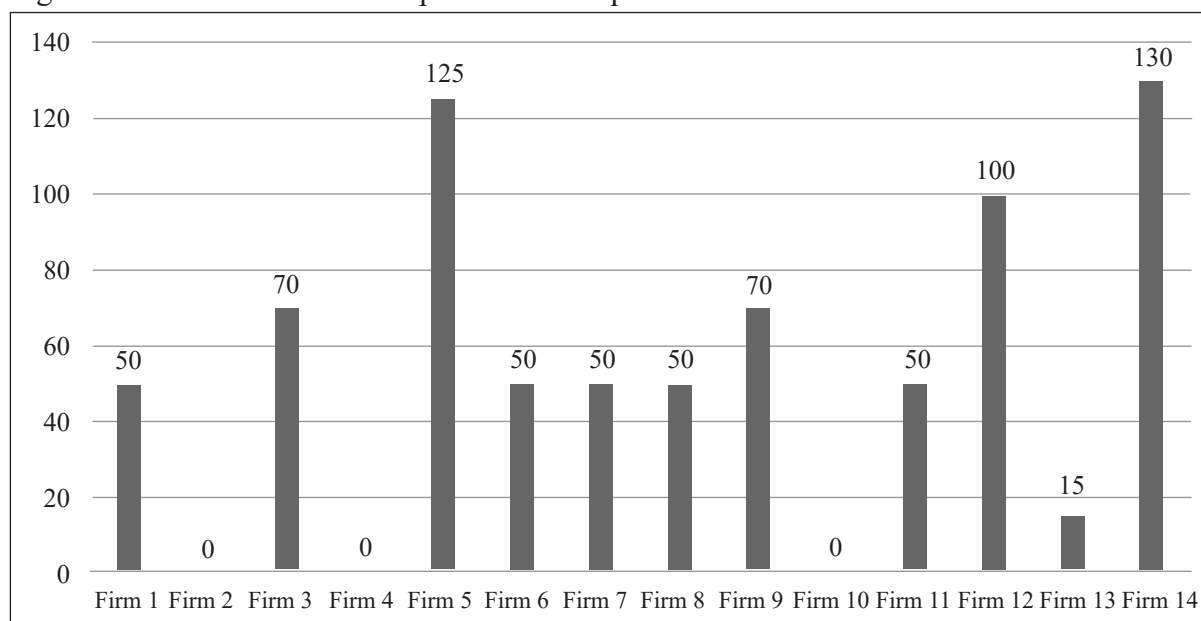
Table 6: Benefits received by interns, firms and educational institutions from internship

Most raised benefits to firms	Most raised benefits to interns	Most inferred benefits to educational institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving labour force • Preparing for future recruitment and/or network for future recruitment • Enhancing future network with universities, schools and/or TVET providers • Gaining fame and recognition from partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being aware of general working atmosphere • Acquiring generic work knowledge and skills • Linking theories learnt at educational institution to real practices at workplace • Gaining a future job opportunity • Receiving a better opportunity cost or having better time spent • Understanding one's career interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilling the gap of limited real work application • Fulfilling the requirements from stakeholders in linking education to the market and in promoting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) • Helping students to get a potential job and so in turns increasing the positive image of the educational institution itself

5.3. Reported internship costs and challenges at the selected firms

Despite reporting benefits and satisfaction, most firms still viewed internship as a cost, especially those without a higher level of self-interest motives in offering the internship. Among the 14 firms, only one claimed that the cost of internship is not a problem for the firm. Generally, internship costs were believed by the firm's representatives to be higher than the benefits gained. However, monetary measurement could not be done because the detailed records of the costs do not exist at the firms. The most overtly identified monetary costs of internship at the selected firms include basically monthly allowance or stipend. The amount of USD50 per month is the most frequent amount of allowance from the 14 firms in this study (See Figure 2). Some firms do not pay allowance at all; some pay up to slightly above USD100¹.

Figure 2: Amount of allowance paid to interns per month in US dollars



¹ Note: Firm 2 gives financial incentives only when there is special work contribution from interns; Firm 3 gives financial incentives upon final evaluation; and Firm 13 offers further long-term training support, so the allowance is low.

Other firms' reported expenses included:

- insurance,
- meals or meal allowances,
- physical costs (uniforms, boots, helmets, etc.),
- other impromptu financial expenses,
- intangible expenditure incurred by using office spaces and materials,
- uncalculated time spent by the firm's supervisors and their training efforts for interns, and
- other occasional monetary benefits such as mobile phone top-up credit incentives and motorbike fuel incentives.

The expenditure of each firm on these aspects may vary significantly according to the types of firms, their internship programs, and the number of interns allowed in each recruited cohort/batch.

Setting a proper allowance package is necessary for internship to function at firms because paying is always a key factor (Hurst and Good 2010), and paid internships result in better labour market outcomes (O'Higgins and Pinedo 2018; Stewart et al. 2018). According to previous studies (e.g., O'Connor and Bodicoat 2016; Stewart et al. 2018), setting the pay too low will result in labour exploitation, breaching the international labour law (e.g., ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization²) and decent employment policy, and limiting productivity and innovation of a firm. On the other hand, setting it too high may lead to too much expectation from interns and so possibly exploitation of interns' well-being (e.g., Grant-Smith, Gillett-Swan and Chapman 2017). Such situation can further affect the interns' educational performance. Unlike professionals or experts, interns are expected to be learning from their works. So, they cannot cope with too much workload or vocational pressure.

Despite the reported benefits and positive perceptions on internship, the firms and the interns in our current dataset also faced challenges (See Table 7). The firms were generally concerned about the interns' performance, their attitudes, the lack of internship training guideline and manuals, the reported low values given by stakeholders to internship, and the coordination or collaboration among internship stakeholders at different stages. The firms raised the following comments related to their challenges of internship:

We cannot really say that internship is our business because interns that we recruited do not have any experiences, so our risk is also high since some of them cannot do well, and we spend a lot of time guiding them. We sometimes have coaching programs for them. That program is a month long. We coach them until they can do their works properly. We also have seniors who are there to support them, and there is a training [they are also allowed to join] every 3 month. All of these are the company's expenditure on the interns, so this is not about taking advantages from them. (10APFR)

Some of the interns are here for their thesis, but they also want salary because, during their second or third year, they used to be an intern in say company A and they were given say 100\$ to 150\$ a month there. So, when they came here, they requested for the salary as well. We have to explain them that internship is a requirement for them to graduate and to get a degree, so they do not have any right to request salary from our company. If our company has anything to offer, they will get it. Besides, as what I have already mentioned earlier, sometimes interns are not responsible; they just quit their training without informing us. (9CKFR)

² See ILO (2011).

.. we know how to calculate the cost, and we can calculate it. For instance, we gave them two meals a day, we also spent on their allowance, and we gave them a two-month training/working practice supervised by two of our staff... and then we can add them all up. There are some other costs, such as on clothes... But we are not required to do the calculation of such costs yet. (7CBFR)

Interns, on the other hand, generally raised psychological challenges such as the sense of not knowing what to do, of doing just trivial things, and of not being independent at work. They also pointed to tiredness (due to simultaneous work and study requirements), which is further related to their time management. Another aspect of interns' challenges is about difficulty in communicating with senior staff and the limited support they receive from the firms and from their educational institutions. Some interns also complained about their daily costs (on meals, motorbike petrol, etc.) which they considered as a challenge. Interns specifically raised the following comments related to the challenges of internship:

In my first month of working, I wanted to go back home. I have never worked that hard. But after half a month, I can adapt. I know it is hard only in the beginning. I would choose to do the thing [internship] again... I used to think studying is hard; now I think studying is easy... I do not know if my friends would work like this because when I first came all I had to do was copying documents and things. It seemed easy, but actually we did not know how to do that. (1MAI1)

First, it is hard in terms of communication. I do not know other people. I just smile. First, I also do not clearly understand the process of the company – what to do, when to do and who to consult... There are things I learnt or get assigned to do, which is not very much related to my field... The university seemed not to coordinate much in the internship. It seemed that teachers even play more roles than the university. (1MAI2)

The pressure was when they scolded at me as I was not skilled enough in certain tasks, and I got another pressure when I had to rush to deliver the needed document. It was extremely hard at first. (9CKI1)

... I only know the trainers [i.e. supervisors] who helped guiding us. Everyone seemed really busy, so we did not have time... I spent a lot of time and money. About time, I used to work [a part-time job] in the morning, but since I had to do internship to complete the thesis, I had to change my work to the night shift, so I got home really late. (11ACDI1)

Table 7 listed all the reported challenges from both parties. Besides their own challenges, the firms' representatives and the interns also acknowledged some points that can reflect the challenges for the interns' educational institutions. These raised challenges of the educational institutions are centred around the coordinating roles and the collaborating mechanisms (See Table 7).

Table 7: Challenges of internship for interns, firms and educational institutions

Most reported firms' challenges	Most reported interns' challenges	Most inferred challenges to educational institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incurred internship costs Cases of unproductive interns causing problems during working time Interns' immature, unfocused and unprofessional attitudes Lacking internship manuals, training experts and/or clear learning outcomes or performing standards Fragmented internship collaboration with partners Low values given to internship from external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of not knowing how to do things properly or fear of mistakes Drained energy, tiredness and stress Poor time management Sense of doing only trivial things Sense of being not independent and/or being discriminated Unachieved expectation from internship as skills learnt or outcomes gained are not clear and whole Limited support from supervisors and firm Self-incurred costs (spending more than earning) Limited support from educational institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding firms for interns and low firms' collaboration Unsophisticated system to coordinate internship at educational institution Collaboration and coordination issues with firms throughout the internship period Dealing with interns' problems with the firms

5.4. Internship processes, stages and approaches at the selected firms

Some firms in this study formulated their own types of internship. For example, at Firm 1, internships were differentiated between 'normal internship' (i.e., interns who are recruited to work for clients of Firm 1) and 'special internship' (i.e., interns who are recruited to serve at the Firm 1 itself). This is mainly because internship is part of its business activities in supplying human resources for other firms. Table 8 indicated the exact number of both types of interns at Firm 1 from 2020 to October 2017.

Table 8: An available dataset of number of interns from Firm 1

Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	October-2017
Normal Interns	88	125	164	195	129	134	148	94
Special Interns	<i>Special Interns are not mentioned from 2010 to 2014</i>					25	44	39
Total	88	125	164	195	129	159	192	133

Source: Submitted to the researchers after the interview

Table 9: An available data on internship program at Firm 11

Social performance indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of employees	7,721	9,451	11,182	11,926	12,325
Training new recruits	1,375	2,711	2,368	1,717	1,374
Internships for local students	1,280	1,220	969	1,241	1,433
Internships for international students	2	3	2	5	1

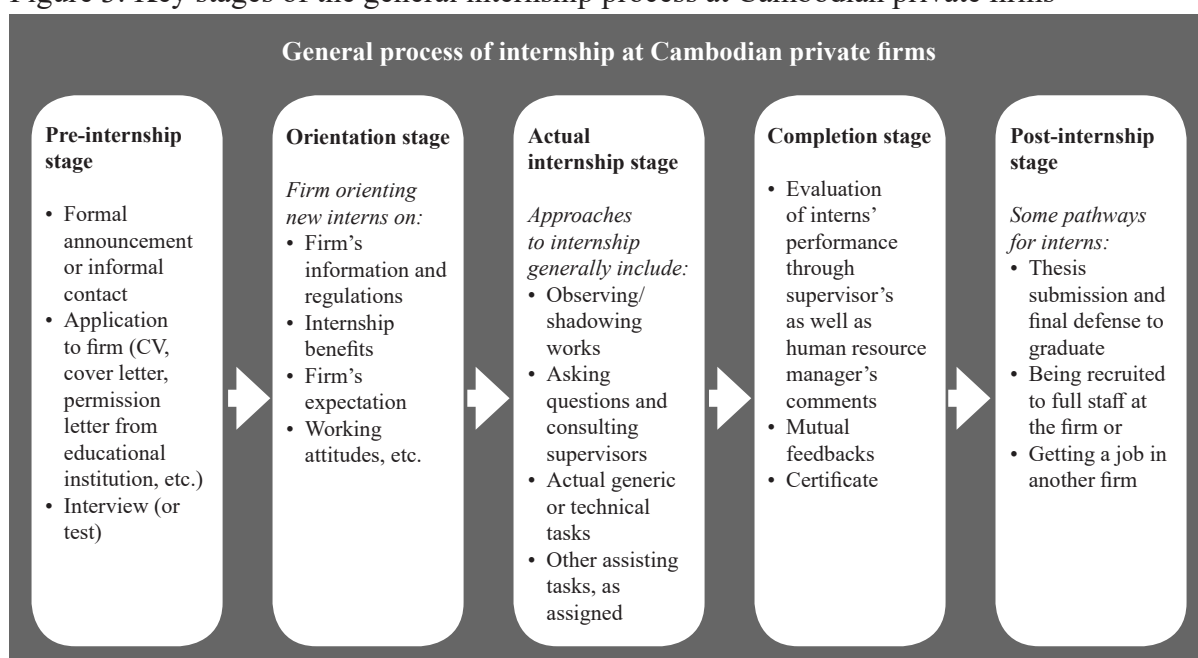
Source: Adopted from its published annual report 2016, 38

At Firm 11 and Firm 6, interns were classified as both local and international interns, as highlighted in Table 9. Most of their interns were local ones, however. It is presumable that the number of internships offered by these two firms is immense due to the business scope of the

firms (e.g. human resources and banking sector), their available resources and their approaches to internship.

Internship programs of the different firms in this study were not operated the same way. Internship programs have various processes depending on the different types of firms recruiting and supervising the interns and educational institutions supplying the interns (Zhao and Liden 2011; Somerick 1993, 10). In this section, we illustrated the generality of the selected Cambodian private firms' internship processes and stages by using a model similar to the Kiser Internship Stage Model (2000) – pre-placement stage, initiation stage, working stage and termination stage (Diambra, Cole-Zakrzewski, and Booher 2004). We extended the model by dividing the termination stage into two: completion stage and post-internship stage. The post-internship stage was added into the framework to explain how the outcomes of the internship may turn out in the selected firms' context (see Figure 3). The whole processes of internship at the 14 firms can hence be categorised into five different stages: pre-internship, orientation, actual internship, completion and post-internship stage.

Figure 3: Key stages of the general internship process at Cambodian private firms



Source: Authors

Pre-internship stage: Through the interviews, it was clear that the pre-internship stage is a very flexible (sometimes very informal) and its approaches vary according to different types of firms and the urgency of the needs for interns. The procedure of this initial stage is similar to the general employment-seeking procedure.

The selected firms generally post a public announcement on a social media platform (such as Facebook) and/or on an employment website. The firms may also send the announcement leaflet to their networked educational institutions. In other cases, the firm informally contacted the educational institutions or the teachers/lecturers directly (or vice-versa). One firm representative asserted:

Sometimes when the company needed employees/interns, we sent the job announcement (with necessary requirements) to the schools, or the organizations that we cooperate with, so they would help us in selecting interns... (7CBFR)

Some firms whose business nature is related to human resource are very proactive in recruiting interns. A representative from one such firm in our samples claimed:

To get interns, [the firm] offers orientation to universities (about 4 to 5 times a year), promote it through career fairs, promote it through social networking platform (e.g., Facebook), contact former intern to recruit new interns, and also approach university directly. (1MAFR)

Sometimes an officially signed MoU between the firm and the educational institution is made. There were few cases in our data that the firms had an official MoU or a special contract with their partnered educational institutions. Such a clear arrangement is made in order to make the expectation and engagement of interns clear from the beginning. The major purpose of such official connection is also to sustainably exchange expertise and resources. Firm 6's representative, for example, claimed that most of the internship agreements at his firm are in the form of MoU (signed with the partnered universities).

In certain cases, students seek internship places and opportunities on their own. Students may apply for an internship position to some firms directly by submitting, for example, a CV, a cover letter, and a permission letter from their educational institution. In such cases, the interns in our study generally reported assistance and guidance from their seniors in order to know which firms they should apply for the internship position. In other words, they first did the searching online or asked for advice from their seniors (or teachers/lecturers) and then submitted their CV, cover letter, and other relevant documents (such as permission letters from their institutions) to the firms by themselves.

All of the firms also reported conducting interviews (and sometimes a written test) to select the internship applicants. Generally, after the document submission, interns were contacted for interviews. The firms conducted the interviews in order to understand the interns' expectations from internship and their background knowledge and skills. One firm in our sample (i.e. Firm 4) even delivered a test for the intern applicants to take in order to more objectively measure the applicants' skill levels.

Orientation stage: The orientation, initiation or induction stage generally constituted various activities to transition the selected internship applicants to their new training place. Such activities included presentation of the firm's internal regulations and policies and introductory guidance on issues such as internship benefits, processes, expected attitudes and previous internship problems to avoid or best practices to follow. The presentation and guidance were generally delivered by the human resource manager and/or the recruitment manager of the selected firm, for half a day.

An orientation on the firm regulations was done to help the interns get aware of the firms' system and culture of working. Box 1 illustrated a short regulation by a manufacturing firm in our study to guide internship implementation. A big part of this firm's expectation is a proper working attitude of the interns. While the firms generally sought to understand interns' expectations during the interview, the firm explicate its expectation from the interns during this orientation stage. The firm also sought further to understand the interns' real expectation during this stage.

In certain occupations (such as construction engineering) in our data, the interns were brought to their specific work sites/areas (outside of the office) during this orientation to be introduced to their specific field (i.e., work location) and their site managers or supervisors.

Box 1: An exemplary (English-translated) regulation document of internship from Firm 2

**Internship Regulation
(Company name)**

In order to ensure the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the internship, students who engage in internship at (the Company name) need to follow the regulations below:

1. Before the internship

For male students, you have to get haircut, trim your nails and trim any mustache and beard. For female interns, do not highlight your hair with strong colour and do not use any strong perfume.

2. During the internship

- a. Be physically active, mindful and careful with your words.
- b. Put on student uniform and carry your intern card when you are at the company compound. (The card will be given on the first day you start your internship.)
- c. Use appropriate language to communicate with directors, supervisors and all workers in the company.
- d. Be punctual and follow the company time schedule.
- e. Follow the company's rules and regulations.
- f. If interns need to take leave, they must ask for permission and provide proper information and reasons to the HR unit.
- g. Before obtaining any documents from the company, interns need to ask for permission from the administration and HR unit.
- h. Do not disclose any of the company's internal information.

3. The final day of internship

At the end of the internship, all interns (including those who seek internship at the company in order to write their thesis or report or merely to get trained) are required to notify their farewell to the senior management to pay respect to them and to obtain further advices from them. Interns need to submit a summary report to the director of the department (under which they serve as an intern) about what they have learnt from the internship. To get the certificate, interns are required to complete the internship report form and submit it to their supervisor a day before the final day of their internship in order to be evaluated (particularly on conformation to the company's regulation, attitudes and behaviors, and knowledge).

4. After the Internship

- a. Interns need to bring their own notebook/record and prepare a slide presentation for the senior management of (the Company name)
- b. Interns can get the certificate from HR unit a month after they finish their internship.

Note: Students who engage in internship to get data to write their thesis are required to submit a copy of their thesis after it has been completed and defended to (the Company name's) HR unit for archiving.

Phnom Penh, December 01st, 2015
Head of Human Resource

Actual internship stage: At this stage, the interns in our samples were exposed to real work tasks in certain ways. For the interns who were more of the assistant or trainee type, they generally shadowed/observed what the working atmosphere is like and how their expected learning areas or skills are managed, operated or conducted at the firm. Most of the time they engaged in generic, less-demanding work tasks (ranging from copying documents to assisting in event organization) assigned by their supervisors or senior staff. Sometimes, they were also allowed to engage in specific productive tasks of a certain technical area under close supervision of their supervisors. The interns were not allowed to engage in serious technical tasks that are dangerous to them or are costly if an error or a mistake is made. What was common from the interviews was that the assigned works for the interns were generally based upon

the real needs of the firm or the supervisor, sometimes quite ad hoc. Besides shadowing and working, the interns can communicate with their supervisors to ask questions or for advises. It seemed, however, that journaling (or note-taking) is not a common practice among the interns interviewed.

As for the interns who engaged more as a research student or field visitor who came to collect needed information from the firm, their main activities were generally about shadowing works, communicating with the firm's representatives to get information, and collecting the needed documents. They generally did not engage in real works (be it generic, less-demanding tasks or specific productive tasks).

From our data, what the interns actually learned from their internship experiences varied, but the reported learning or training outcomes generally included generic knowledge of work atmosphere, specific technical skills (based on actual works guided by the supervisors), peripheral tasks at the offices (such as copying documents, organising documents and files, organising workshops or training sessions, etc.), and soft-skills and working attitudes (e.g., manners in the workplace, communication with others).

At this actual engagement stage, communicating with supervisors is important. It gives interns a chance to get answers for their questions or to get further advises on their vocational life. However, for some of the interviewed interns, they reported challenges in terms of time and commitments of their supervisors.

Interns in the selected Cambodian firms worked like a regular staff in terms of numbers of working hour – i.e., 8 hours a day and 5 or 6 days a week. In some cases, they just worked for half a day on the 6th day, (i.e., Saturday). Generally, the total period of internship was 3 months for the firms in our sample. That period, however, varied from firm to firm in our samples, with some firms offering internship less than a month and some extending internship up to 6 months.

There was generally no additional off-the-job training for interns reported in our data. However, some firms, particularly those dealing with human resources (i.e., Firms 1 and 10), allowed their interns to join the training sessions they conducted for their regular staff or clients. Such offers were clearly ad hoc, not systematically designed for the interns.

Completion stage: The completion or termination stage at the selected firms generally involved an evaluation of the interns' attitudes and performance by a supervisor and/or a human resource manager. At this termination stage, all interns were also given a certificate to prove their internship experience at the firm, as well as a recommendation letter. The interns generally needed these documents to confirm their internship experience to their educational institutions. For some educational institutions, the recommendation letter form was available for the firm's representatives to complete. For such cases, the interns needed to bring the form to the firm after their internship was accomplished successfully. Some of the firms offered the certification and recommendation letter right after the internship completion, while other firms only granted these documents upon requests from the interns.

Some interns were required to submit reports about their internship activities weekly or monthly to their educational institutions during the actual internship stage, while others were required to submit an internship report at this completion stage to the educational institution. What is more, some firms even invited the interns of different batches to gather in a meeting altogether to share experiences about internship and build more network after they completed their internship.

Post-internship stage: After the internship period (from the orientation to the completion stage) at the firm or the working site, there are several post-internship paths that interns may take.

In our data, there was a possibility of interns becoming a fulltime staff at the firm. Some firms' representatives in our samples mentioned that more than 50 percent of the interns could become staff at their firms after the internship. Most of the 14 firms recruited at least one or two outstanding or well-performing interns to be their staff. Those outstanding interns are generally those with a proper attitude and a considerable level of competence.

For the case of interns who came to collect data for their thesis or coursework, they obtained data to write up their course requirement or a thesis and then submitted their assignment or thesis to their educational institution in order to graduate. Some firms required them to submit their final outputs back to the firms.

Some interns were also recruited into another firm as a full staff after obtaining work experiences from their internship. This is a more general trend for interns, compared to the previous two. With their internship experience, they have more opportunities for employment.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This study elaborates on the characteristics of internship programs at 14 selected Cambodian private firms in a comprehensive scope, covering its purposes, processes, costs, benefits, satisfaction and challenges. In the investigation on the purposes of internship programs, the study highlights that the selected Cambodian firms establish internship programs in response to their internal labour needs and to the needs of internship from the educational institutions and/or the students. These push and pull motives are operated on the principle of mutual benefits among the three stakeholders (i.e., the firms, the interns and the educational institutions). It is presumable from this exploratory study that internship programs at Cambodian private firms have not been shaped by any deterministic macro-level policy design in the first place (as in the case of the so-called Active Labour Market Programme scheme) (see O'Higgins and Pileo 2018; Stewart et al. 2018). These internship programs at Cambodian private firms seem to rather emerge out of the real needs of the firms, the interns and the educational institutions.

Corresponding to the identified push and pull factors of internship at the selected Cambodian private firms, two identities of their interns are also observed from the data: (1) the interns who serve as an assistant or a trainee and (2) the interns who come to collect data or information to fulfil their educational requirements. Most of the interns engage with both identities and roles. These two identifies and roles are differentiated by their level of engagement in real productive works or professional/technical assignments. Though the second kind of intern find data collection from firms useful for the educational purposes, they may lose a chance to adequately expose to professional/technical works required by the industry when they start their real employment. However, it should be noted further that, in the current study, even for the interns who engage as an assistant or a trainee, the professional/technical work tasks are not generally assigned to them and, if assigned, those work tasks are not much challenging. Hurst and Good (2010) suggested that more challenging professional work assignments are important to build interns' competences.

The analysis also reveals debatable viewpoints between the positive benefits gained and the negative experiences received during internship from the three stakeholders (i.e., the interns, the firms and the educational institutions). While the firms mostly gain from their fulfilled labour force, future recruitment, networking, and recognition; the students recite the

values of their practical experience with real work tasks, their understanding of the nexus between theories and practices, and their socialisation into the work atmosphere. Likewise, the educational institutions are generally believed to also gain from internship in terms of student employment opportunities, fames and continuous networks with private firms. It is therefore concludable from the current dataset that internship at the Cambodian private firms is beneficial, as obviously detected in previous studies (e.g., Akomaning, Voogt, and Pieters 2011; Cheong et al. 2014).

However, the firms still consider internship a cost. One of the critical issues for internship in Cambodia is not that firms do not see its benefits, but that they do not have measurable evidence to prove that the benefits exceed the costs and that this workplace-based training can really contribute to the firm's productivity and build its professional culture in the long run, as stated in theories. The selected firms in the study also generally lack adequate training resources (such as relevant internal policies specific for internship, internship guideline, supervisor guideline, and/or training manuals). These challenges require firms to reconsider their training design and to seek more collaboration at different stages with educational institutions to seek necessary supports. A feedback system between the educational institutions and the firms to assist internships at different stages is not reported in the current study's dataset.

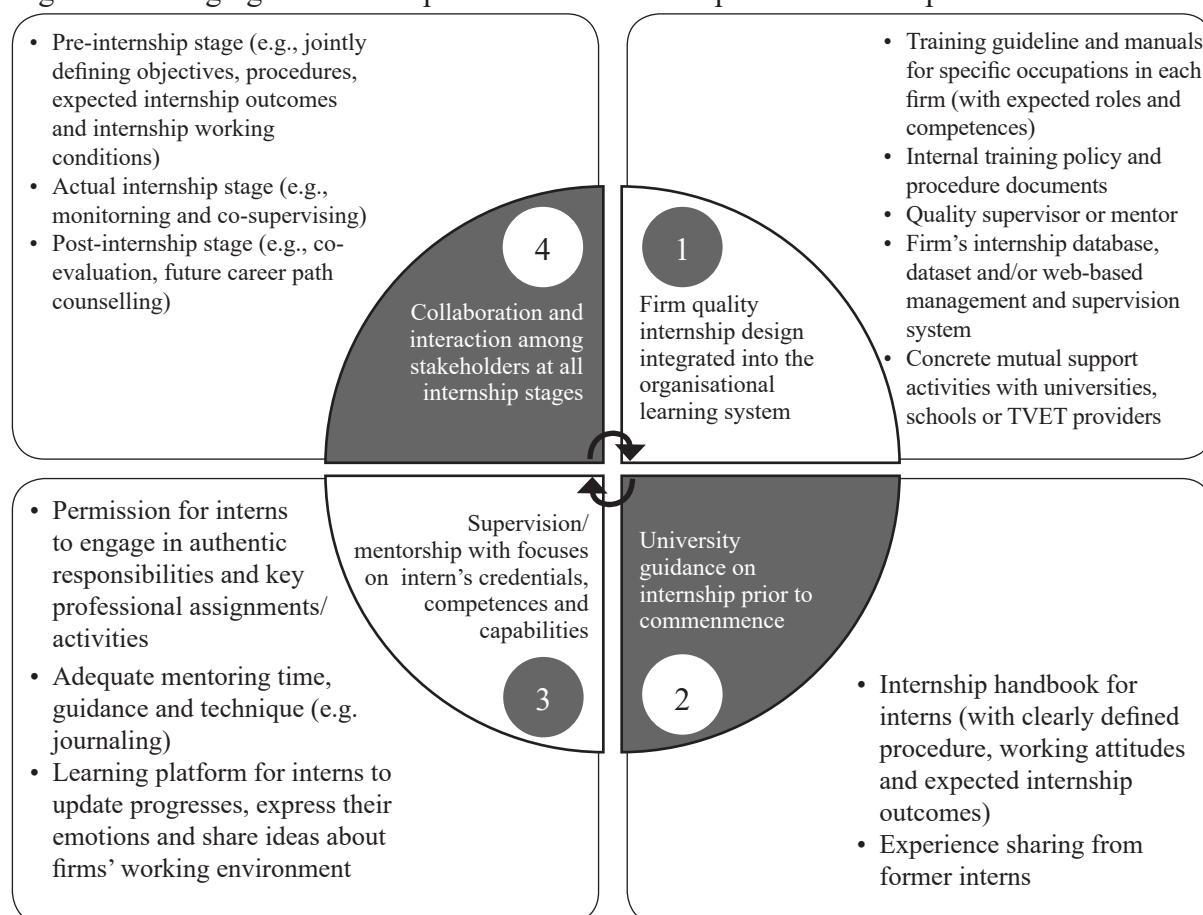
As for the educational institutions, not all of them offer sufficient internship guidance prior to the commencement. Educational institutions need to improve the preparation of students before internship, especially on attitudes and competences interns are expected from firms. In the literature and best practices, supervision of candidates during the internship placement should occur at multiple levels (Welsh, Stanley, and Wilmoth 2004, 181). Such multiple-level supervision appeared to be lacking in our data. Like the firms, the educational institutions sometimes find it hard to seek support from the firms or to collaborate with the firms at different stages of internship. It is worth noting that while the actual internship stage seems to be the most active and intensive, other stages receive much lower attentions and inputs from the stakeholders (i.e., the firms and the educational institutions). In previous studies, such limited collaboration is considered a hindrance to internship success (Yiu and Law 2012) as internship depends on competency and motivation of all party involved (Hurst and Good 2010, 182).

As for interns, because they lack vocational awareness and experiences, they generally face psychological burdens during their first internship period. The feeling of unclear directions, of receiving too much unimportant workloads (that are generic and not much of occupational skills), and of tension in communicating with senior staff make some interns question the outcomes of their internship and their future vocational life. Such psychological burdens can be detrimental in the long run. Interns should not be left to feel that working is possible without professional competences and qualities or that they are just unimportant, unwanted workers. This directly impacts their future vocational attitude and commitment, which may extend beyond the internship period into their future employment.

Though there are such reported negative perceptions on internship from the interns, the firms and the educational institutions, internships offered at private Cambodian firms are generally not considered a "labour exploitation". Even so, interns' pay and internship work regulations are critical issues to further investigate. Even though there are justifications that interns gain work experiences from their internship and may not receive wages or allowances (as regular staff), previous studies have detected that paying internship increases their work accountability (Ryan 2007 cited in Hurst and Good 2020, 182).

After all, the principles underlying the success of internship at Cambodian firms in the future rest on four areas: (1) quality internship design integrated into the organizational learning system at firm, (2) internship guidance focusing on attitudes and expected competences by educational institution, (3) supervision/mentorship focusing on interns' competences, capabilities, and credentials, and (4) seamless collaboration between the firms and the educational institutions to support interns at different internship stages. Figure 4 details specific aspects and activities of each dimension that firms, interns and educational institutions should establish and improve.

Figure 4: Emerging areas for improvement of internship at Cambodian private firms



Source: Authors

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide for firm

Interview guide on A qualitative scoping study of internship Programs of Cambodian private firms (For Firm's Representative)			
Interview instruction: Setting the scene (5 minutes) 1. Interviewer's self-introduction: [Interviewers introduce themselves by reporting their name, position, institution, (connection between interviewer's institution and the target interviewee's institution) and visions of the study (in this case, cost and benefit understanding and future joint internship training).] 2. Interview objectives: Today's interview comprises two objectives: 1). To explore existing facts about internship practices in terms of nature, process, cost and benefits, and 2). To seek to understand how firms and intern experience and perceive internship programs in terms of challenges and satisfaction. Facts and perceptual experience of internship are the two focused concepts of the study. There are 4 sections of the interview and around 10 questions in total. 3. Confirming time availability of respondent, consent form, and the use of voice recorder: The interview lasts about 1 hour. [The researcher adjusts the time according to the convenience of respondents.] Participants read and sign the consent form to agree to participate in the interview. Voice recorder is used. [If participants refute the use of voice recorder, the interviewers take full notes]. The data will be kept confidential and used only by the interviewers and the research team for the purposes of this study. [Check whether participants have confirming questions before the start of the interview].			
Sections	Time	Specific concepts and questions	Other prompting/confirming questions
I. Interviewee's self-introduction and introduction to the institution	3 – 5 minutes	<i>[Note on the beginning of the interview]</i> Asking about name, age, (gender), position, institution, industry/service/products, year of establishment, academic background/terminal degree, and working background of the interviewee.	
II. Facts and information about internship program	15 – 25 minutes	<i>[Note the start of section II]</i> 1. Do you offer additional training courses for intern during such program? How is it operated? 2. Can you describe the cost of internship program as a whole? 3. Can you elaborate on the benefits from internship program? Any changes in overall?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long has it been operated? Who fund/support it? How do you recruit interns? Is the program jointly organised by other institutions? How many interns for each program/ each time? How many interns your institution has trained so far? Are there drops-out during the training? Why? Do interns stay and work for your company? Why or why not? If they quit, how long do they stay generally?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the major components of the program/ training courses? Are training contents relevant to what students learn at school? Who design the training? Who are the instructors/mentors? How do you evaluate whether interns gain the skills needed? • Costs: interns wage, trainers' wages, infrastructure, materials costs, others...? • Benefits: save cost from recruitment, save cost from staff turnover, save cost from future training, meeting skill needs, raising productivity, worker morale, others...?
III. Experience and perceptions of internship	15 – 25 minutes	<p><i>[Note on the start of section III]</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you offer internship programs in the first place? 2. Are you in overall satisfied with the programs? 3. What challenges do you face? What do you not like about the programs? 4. Do you intend to update or improve your internship programs in the future? Why or why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think it is really necessary? • What do you like about the programs? Would you recommend other institutions to have such programs? • What are your suggestions to respond to those challenges? • How about collaboration in designing internship programs with public sector or NGOs?
IV. Closing the interview	3 – 5 minutes	<p><i>[Note on the end of the interview]</i></p> <p>Thanks, interviewees' questions after the interview, and incentives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for documents or data available and accessible and asking about their intention to join CDRI's survey and experimental study in the near future
Thanks for your cooperation!			

Appendix 2: Interview guide for interns

Interview guide on A qualitative scoping study of internship Programs of Cambodian private firms A qualitative scoping study (For Interns)			
Interview instruction: Setting the scene (5 minutes)			
1. Interviewer's self-introduction: [Interviewers introduce themselves by reporting their name, position, institution, (connection between interviewer's institution and the target interviewee's institution) and visions of the study (in this case, cost and benefit understanding and future joint internship training).]			
2. Interview objectives: Today's interview comprises two objectives: 1). To explore existing facts about internship practices in terms of nature, process, cost and benefits, and 2). To seek to understand how firms and intern experience and perceive internship programs in terms of challenges and satisfaction. Facts and perceptual experience of internship are the two focused concepts of the study. There are 4 sections of the interview and around 8 questions in total.			
3. Confirming time availability of respondent, consent form, and the use of voice recorder: The interview lasts about 1 hour. [The researcher adjusts the time according to the convenience of respondents.] Participants read and sign the consent form to agree to participate in the interview. Voice recorder is used. [If participants refute the use of voice recorder, the interviewers take full notes]. The data will be kept confidential and used only by the interviewers and the research team for the purposes of this study. [Check whether participants have confirming questions before the start of the interview].			
Sections	Time	Specific concepts and questions	Other prompting/confirming questions
I. Interviewee's self-introduction and introduction to the institution	3 – 5 minutes	<i>[Note on the beginning of the interview]</i> Asking about name, age, (gender), position, academic background/ terminal degree, academic institution, and working background of the interviewee and year of services	
II. Facts and information about internship program	10 – 15 minutes	<i>[Note the start of section II]</i> 1. Can you describe the internship program you experience at your current institution? How is it operated? 2. Does the institution offer additional training course for intern during the internship program? 3. Can you describe the costs you have to spend (e.g. money, time, and opportunity) during the internship program? 4. Can you elaborate on the benefits you gain from internship programs (e.g. skills, knowledge, attitudes, wages, network...)? Can you give some exact skills? 5. After the internship, do you want to stay and work for institutions or move to work in other institutions? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many hours a day and how many days a week? How are you recruited? What tasks are assigned? What is your wage? Who told you about internship? How long so far since the training? What is your current salary? Are there drop out? What materials are used in the training? How is it like in terms of training approaches? What is the quality of the instruction (independent learning, specialisation skill, etc.)? Who are instructors/mentors? How many participants?

III. Experience and perceptions of internship	10 – 15 minutes	<p><i>[Note on the start of section III]</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you satisfied with your internship experience in overall? Do you like the instruction/mentorship during the training? Why or why not? Would you recommend other students to be an intern here? Why or why not? 2. Do you need other things to be included in the internship program? 3. What challenges do you face when engaging in the internship programs? 	
IV. Closing the interview	3 – 5 minutes	<p><i>[Note on the end of the interview]</i></p> <p>Thanks, interviewees' questions after the interview, and incentives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for documents or data available and accessible and asking about their intention to join CDRI's survey and experimental study in the near future
Thanks for your cooperation!			

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